

**CLAIMS**

We claim:

1 1. An instant message (IM) communication method comprising the steps of:  
2 inserting in an IM a voice communications identifier;  
3 transmitting said IM to a recipient; and,  
4 responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications identifier,  
5 establishing a voice communications link with said recipient.

1 2. The IM communication method of claim 1, wherein said inserting step further  
2 comprises the step of inserting in said IM a selectable symbol denoting voice  
3 communications availability.

1 3. The IM communication method of claim 1, wherein said inserting step further  
2 comprises the step of:  
3 inserting in said IM a reference to a sender of said IM; and,  
4 embedding computer program code in said IM, wherein said computer program  
5 code is configured to establish a voice communications link with said sender.

1 4. The IM communication method of claim 3, wherein said establishing step  
2 comprises the step of responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications  
3 identifier, executing said embedded computer program code in order to establish a  
4 voice communications link with said sender.

5 5. The IM communication method of claim 3, wherein said establishing step  
6 comprises the steps of responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications  
7 identifier, determining a link address for said sender based on said reference, and  
8 executing said embedded computer program code in order to establish a voice  
9 communications link with said sender according to said determined link address.

1 6. The IM communication method of claim 5, wherein said link address is a  
2 telephone number.

1 7. The IM communication method of claim 5, wherein said link address is an IP  
2 address.

1 8. The IM communication method of claim 1, wherein said establishing step  
2 comprises the step of responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications  
3 identifier, establishing a Voice over IP (VoIP) based voice communications link with said  
4 recipient.

1 9. The IM communication method of claim 1, wherein said establishing step  
2 comprises the step of responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications  
3 identifier, establishing a telephony-based voice communications link with said recipient  
4 over a public switched telephone network (PSTN).

1 10. An instant message (IM) communication method comprising the steps of:  
2 detecting a voice communications identifier in an IM transmitted by a sender;  
3 responsive to detecting said voice communications identifier, displaying a  
4 selectable icon; and,  
5 responsive to a selection of said icon, establishing a voice communications link  
6 with said sender.

1 11. The IM communication method of claim 10, wherein said establishing step  
2 comprises the steps of:  
3 extracting from said IM embedded computer program code configured to  
4 establish a voice communications link with said sender; and,  
5 responsive to said selection of said icon, executing said embedded computer  
6 program code in order to establish a voice communications link with said sender.

1 12. The IM communication method of claim 11, further comprising the step of  
2 extracting an embedded reference to said sender from said IM.

1 13. The IM communication method of claim 12, wherein said executing step further  
2 comprises the steps of:  
3 determining a link address for said sender based on said extracted reference;  
4 and,

5           executing said embedded computer program code in order to establish a voice  
6       communications link with said sender according to said determined link address.

1       14.    The IM communication method of claim 13, wherein said link address is a  
2       telephone number.

1       15.    The IM communication method of claim 13, wherein said link address is an IP  
2       address.

1       16.    The IM communication method of claim 10, wherein said establishing step  
2       comprises the step of responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications  
3       identifier, establishing a Voice over IP (VoIP) based voice communications link with said  
4       recipient.

1       17.    The IM communication method of claim 10, wherein said establishing step  
2       comprises the step of responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications  
3       identifier, establishing a telephony-based voice communications link with said recipient  
4       over a public switched telephone network (PSTN).

1 18. The IM communications method of claim 11, further comprising the steps of:  
2 extracting from said IM embedded references to said sender and at least one  
3 other recipient of said IM; and,  
4 displaying a corresponding selectable icon for each of said at least one other  
5 recipients.

1 19. The IM communication method of claim 18, further comprising the steps of:  
2 responsive to a selection of one of said selectable icons, identifying a  
3 corresponding recipient and determining a link address for said corresponding recipient  
4 based on said extracted reference; and,  
5 executing said embedded computer program code in order to establish a voice  
6 communications link with said corresponding recipient according to said determined link  
7 address.

1 20. The IM communication method of claim 18, further comprising the steps of:  
2 responsive to a selection of two or more of said selectable icons, identifying a  
3 corresponding recipient for each selected icon and determining a link address for said  
4 corresponding recipients based on said extracted references; and,  
5 executing said embedded computer program code in order to establish a  
6 conference call with said corresponding recipients according to said determined link  
7 addresses.

1 21. A machine readable storage having stored thereon a computer program having a  
2 plurality of code sections executable by a machine for causing the machine to perform  
3 the steps of:

4 inserting in an instant message (IM) a voice communications identifier;  
5 transmitting said IM to a recipient; and,  
6 responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications identifier,  
7 establishing a voice communications link with said recipient.

1 22. The machine readable storage of claim 21, wherein said inserting step further  
2 comprises the step of inserting in said IM a selectable symbol denoting voice  
3 communications availability.

1 23. The machine readable storage of claim 21, wherein said inserting step further  
2 comprises the step of:  
3 inserting in said IM a reference to a sender of said IM; and,  
4 embedding computer program code in said IM, wherein said computer program  
5 code is configured to establish a voice communications link with said sender.

1 24. The machine readable storage of claim 23, wherein said establishing step  
2 comprises the step of responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications  
3 identifier, executing said embedded computer program code in order to establish a  
4 voice communications link with said sender.

1 25. The machine readable storage of claim 23, wherein said establishing step  
2 comprises the steps of responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications  
3 identifier, determining a link address for said sender based on said reference, and  
4 executing said embedded computer program code in order to establish a voice  
5 communications link with said sender according to said determined link address.

1 26. The machine readable storage of claim 25, wherein said link address is a  
2 telephone number.

1 27. The machine readable storage of claim 25, wherein said link address is an IP  
2 address.

1 28. The machine readable storage of claim 21, wherein said establishing step  
2 comprises the step of responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications  
3 identifier, establishing a Voice over IP (VoIP) based voice communications link with said  
4 recipient.

1 29. The machine readable storage of claim 21, wherein said establishing step  
2 comprises the step of responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications  
3 identifier, establishing a telephony-based voice communications link with said recipient  
4 over a public switched telephone network (PSTN).

1 30. A machine readable storage having stored thereon a computer program having a  
2 plurality of code sections executable by a machine for causing the machine to perform  
3 the steps of:

4 detecting a voice communications identifier in an instant message (IM)  
5 transmitted by a sender;

6 responsive to detecting said voice communications identifier, displaying a  
7 selectable icon; and,

8 responsive to a selection of said icon, establishing a voice communications link  
9 with said sender.

1 31. The machine readable storage of claim 30, wherein said establishing step  
2 comprises the steps of:

3 extracting from said IM embedded computer program code configured to  
4 establish a voice communications link with said sender; and,

5 responsive to said selection of said icon, executing said embedded computer  
6 program code in order to establish a voice communications link with said sender.

1 32. The machine readable storage of claim 31, further comprising the step of  
2 extracting an embedded reference to said sender from said IM.



1 33. The machine readable storage of claim 32, wherein said executing step further  
2 comprises the steps of:

3 determining a link address for said sender based on said extracted reference;

4 and,

5 executing said embedded computer program code in order to establish a voice  
6 communications link with said sender according to said determined link address.

1 34. The machine readable storage of claim 33, wherein said link address is a  
2 telephone number.

1 35. The machine readable storage of claim 33, wherein said link address is an IP  
2 address.

1 36. The machine readable storage of claim 30, wherein said establishing step  
2 comprises the step of responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications  
3 identifier, establishing a Voice over IP (VoIP) based voice communications link with said  
4 recipient.

1 37. The machine readable storage of claim 30, wherein said establishing step  
2 comprises the step of responsive to said recipient selecting said voice communications  
3 identifier, establishing a telephony-based voice communications link with said recipient  
4 over a public switched telephone network (PSTN).

1 38. The machine readable storage of claim 31, further comprising the steps of:  
2 extracting from said IM embedded references to said sender and at least one  
3 other recipient of said IM; and,  
4 displaying a corresponding selectable icon for each of said at least one other  
5 recipients.

1 39. The machine readable storage of claim 38, further comprising the steps of:  
2 responsive to a selection of one of said selectable icons, identifying a  
3 corresponding recipient and determining a link address for said corresponding recipient  
4 based on said extracted reference; and,  
5 executing said embedded computer program code in order to establish a voice  
6 communications link with said corresponding recipient according to said determined link  
7 address.

1 40. The machine readable storage of claim 38, further comprising the steps of:  
2 responsive to a selection of two or more of said selectable icons, identifying a  
3 corresponding recipient for each selected icon and determining a link address for said  
4 corresponding recipients based on said extracted references; and,  
5 executing said embedded computer program code in order to establish a  
6 conference call with said corresponding recipients according to said determined link  
7 addresses.

1 41. An instant message (IM) article of manufacture for use between IM/Chat session  
2 clients in a computer communications network comprising:

3 a header component encapsulating a reference to at least one of a sending node  
4 in the network and a recipient node in the network;

5 a text component encapsulating message text which can be extracted from the  
6 IM and displayed in an IM/Chat session client; and,

7 an executable voice communications link program component configured to  
8 establish a voice communications link between said sending and recipient nodes.

1 42. The IM article of manufacture of claim 41, wherein said voice communications  
2 link is a Voice over IP (VoIP) based communications link.

1 43. The IM article of manufacture of claim 42, wherein said voice communications  
2 link is a telephony-based link

1 44. An instant message (IM)/Chat session client comprising:

2 a conventional IM processor, said conventional IM processor extracting and  
3 displaying message text encapsulated in a received IM; and,

4 a voice conversation processor, said voice conversation processor identifying a  
5 voice communications link identifier encapsulated in said received IM, displaying a  
6 selectable icon in response to detecting said voice communications link identifier and,

- 7 responsive to a selection of said selectable icon, establishing a voice communications
- 8 link with a sender of said received IM.

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